DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 027 792 FL 001 221

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A Modern Language Center: Scope, Activities and Plans.

Ontario Inst. for Studies in Education, Toronto.
Pub Date 68
Note-20p.
EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$1.10
Descriptors-Clearinghouses, *Developmental Programs, Documentation, Graduate Study, Information Centers, *Language Instruction, Language Research, Modern Languages, *Program Descriptions, *Research and Development Centers, Research Projects, Resource Centers, *Second Language Learning, Teacher Education
Identifiers-Canada, Modern Language Center, OISE, Ontario Institute for Studies in Education

One of several informative brochures being prepared to inform professional educators of the research and development activities of the Department of Curriculum of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, this booklet discusses the nature of the Modern Language Center and gives details of its scope, activities, and plans for developing second language teaching and learning in Canada. Following a descriptive outline of the Center's areas of study and its five-fold function, there is a rundown of current and projected developmental activities and research interests. (AF)

ED027792

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# A Modern Language Center

## SCOPE, ACTIVITIES AND PLANS

H. H. STERN

FL 001 221

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# Foreword

The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, created in July, 1965, functions as an educational research institute, as a center for curriculum development, and also as a graduate school conducting programs leading towards advanced degrees of the University of Toronto.

In 1967, the Board of Governors of OISE recognized the need to establish a modern language unit as a task of national importance.

In the same year, Dr. H. H. Stern of the University of Essex, England, was invited to become the first director of this project and he came to Canada in the Spring of 1968. The modern language unit, created in the Department of Curriculum, has now carried out six months of preparatory activity and is ready to function – although as yet on a small scale. Designated by its present informal name of 'Modern Language Center', the unit has considerable potential for the development of second-language teaching and learning in Ontario and Canada.

As a means of bringing professional educators to a better understanding of the research and development program of the Department of Curriculum, several informative brochures are in preparation. The present one has been prepared by Professor Stern to give interested readers an idea of the nature of this center with details of its scope, activities and plans.

Alan F. Brown, Chairman
Department of Curriculum

October 1968

# I: Background

Second-language teaching is a vital issue for education in Canada generally and for Ontario in particular. *The Report of the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism*[1] recommends:

> . . . because Canada will need more bilingual citizens in the future than it has in the past, a minimum objective must be for all students to receive a basic introduction to both official languages so that they may become bilingual, if the need or the opportunity should arise. (P. 129)

In an equally emphatic way the Report of the Provincial Committee on Aims and Objectives of Education in the Schools of Ontario, *Living and Learning*[2] devotes several paragraphs to the question of bilingualism and multilingualism and concludes:

> The modern world is multi-lingual. The revolution in travel and communications has made us neighbors of many people whose mother tongue is not English. To understand and communicate with these neighbors, we must master additional languages. The day of unilingualism and splendid isolation is over. The English-speaking person should no longer expect others to learn English in order to communicate with him. (P. 92)

Ontario has been fortunate in having had an active and farsighted Modern Language Committee since 1963. This committee, working under the auspices of the Ontario Curriculum Institute, expressed repeatedly its belief in the importance of a substantial effort in language instruction. In the years 1963 to 1965 it published four reports, each of which deals with aspects of language teaching and learning constructively and in detail.[3] In 1965 – the year The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education was founded – the Committee reached the conclusion that many of its recommendations could not

1 Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationery, 1967.

2 Toronto: Newton Publishing Company, 1968. This report is referred to as the "Hall-Dennis Report."

3 Ontario Curriculum Institute, Modern Language Committee, *French as a Second Language, An Interim Report* (Toronto: The Institute, 1963); *idem, Interim Report Number Two* (Toronto: The Institute, 1964); *idem, Third Language Study, Report Number Three* (Toronto: The Institute, 1965); *idem, English as a Second Language for French-speaking Students in Secondary Schools, Report Number Four* (Toronto: The Institute, 1965).

be implemented through the work of a committee; a more permanent institution was needed. The final sentence of the third report recommended: "that the new Ontario Institute for Studies in Education include a Modern Language Center."

In 1966, OISE, acting on this recommendation, invited Miss Muriel McCuaig, the chairman of the Modern Language Committee, to convene a small core committee whose task it was to state the exact nature, extent, and function of a Modern Language Center. *The Proposals of the Modern Language Committee of The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education for a Modern Language Center* were embodied in a twenty-one page document issued in April 1967, which concluded as follows:

> . . . the linguistic problems in Ontario and in English-speaking Canada are unique. They are unique in their urgency and unique in opportunities for solution. All that is needed is the creation of appropriate machinery to direct the sustained effort required. It is a national disgrace that until the present, despite Canada's linguistic heritage, there has not been a single center or institute in all of English-speaking Canada devoted to the study of languages. Now, based on the work of the Modern Language Committee of the Ontario Curriculum Institute, and with its broad terms of reference, The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education is in a position to make a truly original contribution to language study through the creation of such a center. (Pp. 10-11)

The committee suggested that the new center should consist of sections dealing with linguistics, research, content and method, and liaison with teacher training institutions.

Three major features of the proposal which make the center unique among similar projects or centers elsewhere should be noted:

1. The proposed center was designed to deal with *all* aspects of language teaching in a *comprehensive* way.
2. It was recognized that the many problems of language teaching could not be solved in a short time nor by an intensive burst of activity, but required *a long-term approach* and some form of *institutional permanence*.
3. To make the center viable, it was thought that it should be closely associated with OISE, although it should also have a measure of independence and functional unity. By its close association with OISE it would share the advantages of the parent body which is an autonomous educational institute, affiliated to a university, and engaged in *research, development,* and *graduate teaching*.

The proposal of the Modern Language Committee was adopted by the Board of Governors of OISE on April 20, 1967; the first director was appointed in October, 1967; and the center began its activities on May 1, 1968.

# II: Plan for the Modern Language Center

Immediately after the appointment of the Director of the Modern Language Center in October 1967, a blueprint for the organization of the center was drawn up. This plan was not intended for immediate execution; it was meant to serve as a goal towards which to work, assuming that such a center would eventually have to fulfill the manifold tasks set to it by the Modern Language Committee. It was planned with the awareness that it would have to be revised from time to time in the light of development and further experience. However, the present revised plan, prepared less than a year after the original, differs only in minor details. The execution of the various parts of the revised plan will depend on financial and human resources, and the continued support inside and outside OISE for the growth of the center.

The Modern Language Center is organized within the Department of Curriculum. The teaching of any language at any stage, provided it is taught as a second or foreign language, falls within the range of interest of the center. The scope of the studies undertaken by the center can be divided into two areas: the general study of language teaching and the study of different languages, which are described below under the heading "Areas of Study." In relation to these areas, the center will attempt to fulfill a fivefold function, which is described under the heading "Main Functions of the Modern Language Center."

## AREAS OF STUDY

1. *The General Study of Language Teaching*

This area includes the fundamental disciplines and studies which are common to all language teaching, regardless of the particular language taught:

Theory of language teaching: the systematic study of language teaching, its theory, research, and practice

General linguistics

Sociolinguistics: the institutional aspects of language teaching, demographic and sociological factors in language and the socio-cultural context in the study of languages

Psycholinguistics: the study of psychology in relation to second-language learning

Language teaching technology

Language testing and assessment

It should be pointed out that the center is not concerned with the full range of the disciplines represented in these studies. The limiting factor is the relevance of studies to the teaching and learning of languages. The interest is "applied" rather than "pure". It is in this respect that the center distinguishes its work from the study of these fields in other departments and centers of the University or OISE. This restriction of emphasis, however, does not mean that studies are pursued in a narrowly vocational way, unrelated to the basic scholarship. Close contact with the work of scholars, for example, in linguistics, psychology, sociology, educational theory, or communication engineering, will be developed.

2. *The Study of Different Languages*

The second area consists of studies of particular languages. Priority is given to French and English. Other languages, especially German, Spanish, Russian, Italian, and Portuguese will follow. It is also likely that some non-European languages will be included. The range of activities with regard to each of the languages may consist of the following:

Descriptive studies of contemporary varieties of the language

The study of socio-cultural contexts and situations

The collection and study of literary and non-literary texts, spoken and written, general and specialized

The collection, study, and development of teaching materials

The methodology of teaching the language in question

The development and application of tests on the language

Again, as in the first area, the direction of activities is "applied." The studies in this area lay emphasis on such descriptive and applied data as are relevant to the teaching of the language in question and the making of teaching materials. Far from competing with the graduate and research work of language departments in the universities, the specialist studies in this area will depend and draw on the scholarship provided by the language departments, and it is important that close contact with these departments be maintained.

## MAIN FUNCTIONS OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE CENTER

Within the areas indicated above, the center fulfills five main functions: graduate studies, research, development, information, and coordination.

These were already implicit in the original proposal, and accord with the major functions of The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

1. *Graduate Studies*
   In the two main areas of its activities, the general study of language teaching and the study of separate languages, the center will provide graduate courses at the M.A., M.Ed., and Ph.D. level.
   In the early stages, the staff of the center will contribute only a few courses to the existing options within the Department of Curriculum. In time, however, it is hoped to add a number of courses so that a substantial training in applied linguistics for specialists in modern languages will be available.

2. *Research*
   Research will be developed in at least three directions: (a) applied linguistics, (b) second-language teaching and learning, (c) the teaching of languages in Canada generally and in Ontario in particular. Other research areas are not ruled out, but those indicated above are of special importance for the center. For further information on research, planned and in progress, Sections III, IV, and V should be consulted.

3. *Development*
   The development projects which the center will undertake may have to be separately funded and staffed. It is hoped for example, that teachers on short-term secondment will be enabled to work in conjunction with the regular staff of the center. Developmental work should be based on specific needs identified in Ontario schools and colleges and should be evolved in cooperation with the Department of Education, school boards, teachers' organizations, publishers, and others. For further details of possible directions of developmental projects, Section VI should be consulted.

4. *Information and Documentation*
   The center is establishing facilities for information and documentation as a field service. These will include:

   A comprehensive collection of language teaching texts and materials, including tests

   Information and a restricted documentation on linguistics, various languages, language teaching, and modern language teaching in Ontario and Canada

   Information on academic courses, centers, summer institutes, etc., in languages, language teaching, and linguistics in North America and Europe

The center will also organize, or contribute to, lecture courses, conferences, or seminars on questions of language teaching and related topics.

5. *Coordination and Clearing House*
The center does not intend to monopolize work on language teaching. On the contrary, one of the major objectives ought to be to stimulate and develop interest wherever it occurs. It would be quite unjustified – and in practice also quite unfeasible – to concentrate all activities in one unit. Some of the work conducted under the aegis of the center could be carried out elsewhere, for example, in university language departments, in teachers' colleges, colleges of education or schools in the province, with the Modern Language Center exercising a coordinating function. It might be considered useful for the center to act as a clearing house. If this role is widely accepted, it would be helpful if the center received information of special expertise, activities, and interests in different parts of Ontario or elsewhere in Canada.

## LANGUAGE SCHOOL

In addition to what has been said about the scope and function of the center it is hoped to set up a small unit as a "language school" in order to offer limited facilities for teaching and learning languages within the center. The purpose of this unit would be (a) to provide a framework for experimental teaching in a realistic setting, and (b) to meet certain language learning requirements of staff and students of the center and of OISE generally.

The work of the unit might include experimental language classes; advanced language learning and remedial facilities for specialist students of the center; special courses (for example, reading courses in a foreign language for OISE students), and the provision of self-teaching programs, including some outside the usual range of languages.

# III: Current Developments (Fall 1968)

Apart from the preliminary work which was carried out during the winter of 1967-68, the center formally began its activities in May 1968. Recent and current activities may be summarized as follows:

1. *Graduate Teaching*
   One credit course on modern language teaching theory, (1318X, Modern Languages in the Curriculum), for M.A., M.Ed., and Ph.D. students was held in the Summer session of 1968 and is being repeated in the regular session of 1968-69 with the prospect of continuing thereafter.

2. *Research*
   Studies in applied linguistics: one study on French in progress

   Studies of second-language teaching and learning: three in progress

   Studies on the teaching of languages in Ontario: a bibliographical review in progress

   For further details see Sections IV and V.

3. *Developmental Projects*
   No work has yet been initiated (see Section VI).

4. *Information and Clearing House*
   A substantial start has been made in setting up a collection of language teaching materials and tests.

   Documents and a bibliography of studies relevant to language teaching, including language teaching in Ontario, are being assembled.

## IV: Research Interests of the Modern Language Center

As was pointed out in Sections II and III, research is already being developed in the Modern Language Center. It will be discussed in this section under the headings: *Studies in Applied Linguistics, Studies of Second-Language Teaching and Learning,* and *Studies on the Teaching of Languages in Canada.*

Other research areas are also under consideration. But from the point of view of the Modern Language Center, the lines of research indicated above are of immediate interest and value.

### STUDIES IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

One group of studies should be directed to the languages taught or to be taught. Priority will be given to French and English as second languages. A *major* area of investigation should be the linguistic study of contemporary forms of French and English. A *minor* area could broadly be described as cultural studies on these languages.

A primary reason for studies in these two areas will become clear if it is remembered that an important field of activity for the Modern Language Center must be to contribute to the development of language teaching in Ontario. There are a number of developmental projects in which the Modern Language Center is likely to participate. If these projects are not merely to be variations on already existing themes, it will be necessary to provide the "developer" with a basis in contemporary linguistic information and cultural themes on which he can draw.

To see this in terms of any one language, the first requirement is a critical review and synthesis of existing information on the present-day form and use of the language. Such work is, in the first place, likely to be largely bibliographical and, in the second, to lead to an analysis and digest of existing studies. But linguistic studies of any particular language do not necessarily concentrate on those aspects that are of importance in second-language teaching, or on those aspects that concern the teaching of the language in Canada. A review of the linguistic studies of a language is likely to reveal gaps which specially commissioned studies will have to fill. These considerations have led to the development of Project 1, "French Applied Linguis-

tics." The first part of this project, consisting of a selection and review of linguistic studies of French, is under way.

As for cultural studies, these should be closely geared to the possible content of courses, according to the age, experience, motivations, and specified purposes of given groups of learners.

## STUDIES OF SECOND-LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

Another main area of investigation for the center is research on language teaching and language learning. At present, there are few centers in which language teaching is the subject of consistent long-term investigation. It is our hope that the Modern Language Center of OISE will be one of these.

Our primary concern in this work is the improvement of the theory and practice of language teaching, but we believe that the study of language learning can also throw light on the nature of language and the psychology of language acquisition. In the preface to an important series of studies on second-language learning, Crothers and Suppes express the same idea but with a different emphasis: "Each experiment was motivated not only by our theoretical interests, but also by our concern with practical problems of second-language instruction."[1] *Our* basic concern, however, must be the *practical* problems of second-language teaching and learning. Even so, we are open also to the wider theoretical implications.

The emphasis on the theory of language teaching suggests that we view the studies not as unrelated separate pieces but as integral parts of a wider scheme. The formulation of a comprehensive theory of language teaching is part of the research we will attempt to undertake. Moreover, the center sees research as part of a sequence of events in the history of second-language instruction; research is important today because of the continuing controversies over methods and techniques and the disillusionment that has arisen from them. Undoubtedly, these controversies and the many innovations that have been introduced since the early part of the century have greatly extended the possibilities of language teaching; but they have not solved the language learning problem. The great breakthrough has not happened. The demand for language learning is increasing, yet the ability to cope with this demand has not substantially improved.

Research can contribute to the solution of this problem, not by attempting to find the ultimate answer, but by isolating important variables and experimenting with them. We believe that the accumulated experience of language teachers, innovators, inventors of methods and technologies constitutes a body of procedures and techniques which must be examined in greater detail than has been done in the past. This repertoire can be ordered

[1] E. Crothers and P. Suppes, *Experiments in Second-Language Learning* (New York and London: Academic Press, 1967), p. v.

along certain dimensions. One task ahead is to establish a taxonomy of language-teaching techniques. Instead of asking such questions as which method is better – "traditional" or "audio-lingual" – we will attempt to experiment with identifiable variables and to examine in detail basic concepts of language teaching theory.

Three studies in this area are under way: one on the role of explanation and analysis in second-language teaching, a second on the concept of "difficulty" in a foreign language, and a third on language teaching and the teaching of English to speakers of Jamaican Creole. These three studies are included in the suggestions for research projects outlined in Section V, under Project 3, "Theory and Method Studies." In addition, two further studies, outlined under Project 4, "Language Laboratory Study" and Project 5, "Programmed Instruction," are being planned.

### STUDIES ON THE TEACHING OF LANGUAGES IN CANADA

The Modern Language Center at OISE is well placed to study and survey language teaching and its problems both in Ontario and in Canada.

In this area, we hope to undertake a number of studies on language teaching in Ontario, and we have begun a review of relevant literature and documentation. This review, which is being carried out with the help of graduate students, covers the following:

1. Languages in the school system
2. Second languages beyond and outside the school system
3. English as a second language
4. The cultivation of French as the mother tongue
5. Bilingual education and the cultivation of other mother tongues
6. Teaching materials and the evaluation of language teaching
7. Language teachers and their training

For a plan of a project arising out of this review, see Section V, Project 6, "Studies on the Teaching of Languages in Ontario."

# V: Suggestions for Research Projects (1969-1971)

The following titles indicate directions of research projects, proposed or under way, for which support may be necessary.

*Studies in Applied Linguistics*
- Project 1: French Applied Linguistics
- Project 2: English Applied Linguistics

*Studies of Second-Language Teaching and Learning*
- Project 3: Theory and Method Studies
- Project 4: Language Laboratory Study
- Project 5: Programmed Instruction

*Studies on the Teaching of Languages in Canada*
- Project 6: Studies on the Teaching of Languages in Ontario.

Of the above projects, 1, 3, and 6 have already been started in a small way and could be expanded along the lines suggested in the outlines that follow. The initial development of the projects is planned to extend over a period of two years. Much of the work in each case is exploratory, but tangible results could be expected within the allotted period. It should be stressed that these suggestions do not constitute formal research proposals, nor do they exclude the consideration of other research subjects. They serve to indicate the directions in which the center intends to move.

## STUDIES IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS (PROJECTS 1 AND 2)

These projects are *linguistic* because the studies fall broadly into the area of descriptive linguistics and sociolinguistics. They are *applied* in the sense that the interest and object of the research is to support developmental studies on the language (French and English as second languages in particular). The importance of work in this area has already been stressed in Section IV.

Two projects are proposed, one in French and the other in English:

### *Project 1: French Applied Linguistics*

This project is divided as follows:

1. An investigation of present-day French and French linguistic studies (a

bibliographical and interpretive inquiry)

2. Sociocultural studies of French: selection of sociocultural data and materials, with a review of methods and approaches
3. Canadian French: an exploratory review of linguistic and sociocultural aspects

The object of all three studies is to obtain the necessary linguistic and cultural information for any developmental work. This project is not intended to be primarily a first-hand study, but a sifting and sorting operation, summarizing and interpreting, so that research already available is made accessible and serviceable to workers in development. The study should also reveal gaps and give leads for future first-hand investigations.

Expected Outcome: bibliographical lists; short papers recommending lines of thought and policy on given linguistic points; collection of specimens of relevant spoken and written French; collection of relevant linguistic studies; research proposals on areas not covered by existing work; a source book and guide on present-day French for teachers, advanced students, and course writers.

Duration of Project: approximately two years.

*Project 2: English Applied Linguistics*

This project, which is intended to be the foundation for work on English as a second language, is divided as follows:

1. Review of linguistic studies of English, and of studies concerned with English as a second language
2. Studies on varieties of English with special emphasis on North American and Canadian English
3. Exploratory sociocultural enquiries including documentation, as a basis for teaching English to New Canadians

Expected Outcome: bibliographical lists; papers recommending lines of thought and policy on the arrangement of course materials and also on given linguistic points; collection of relevant, spoken and written specimens of English; documentation on linguistic studies; documentation on sociocultural situations and contexts relevant to the teaching and learning of English in Canada today; further research proposals; a source book and guide on present-day English in Canada, for the use of teachers, advanced students, and course producers in the Canadian context.

Duration of Project: approximately two years.

### STUDIES OF SECOND-LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING (PROJECTS 3-5)

This group of studies has already been discussed in Section IV. Briefly, the object of these studies is to examine language teaching theories, methods, procedures and techniques, together with enquiries on technological aids. They are studied from both the teaching and learning angles, and therefore have a methodological as well as a psychological interest.

*Project 3: Theory and Method Studies*

These studies should be exploratory and small-scale while the center builds up adequate documentation on the existing work in this field.

It is expected that during the term of the project, from 1969-1971, individual investigators under the direction of H. H. Stern will explore certain aspects of language teaching methodology. After this period of exploration, it is hoped that the work will lead to a major investigation within this area.

Aspects which may be considered by these enquiries are: historical (development of techniques); taxonomic; theoretical; experimental; observational; psychological (e.g. subjective effect of techniques on teachers and pupils); linguistic; evaluative (e.g. effectiveness of the techniques in varying circumstances).

Expected Outcome: documentation on language teaching research; results of small-scale experiments; statements on specific aspects of language teaching (e.g. the role of explanation in language teaching or the concept of difficulty in language learning); documentation and bibliography on detailed aspects of language teaching methodology; experience in the methodology of experimentation on language teaching.

Duration of Project: approximately two years.

*Project 4: A Preliminary Investigation in Constructional Aspects and Educational Uses of Language Laboratories and Other Technological Aids*

The object of this investigation is to make a well documented critical review of the present state of the construction and uses of language laboratories and other technological aids; to initiate experimental work in this area; and to make research proposals for further detailed investigations.

Duration of Project: approximately two years.

*Project 5: A Preliminary [illegible]igation of Programmed Instruction or Computer Assisted Instru[illegible] in Language Teaching*

This study is intended to guide our future work on programmed instruction and may have particularly important bearing on decisions that arise out of the Hall-Dennis Report (see p. 3, footnote 2).

Expected Outcome: an evaluation of the achievement and potential uses of programmed instruction or computer assisted instruction in language teaching; an experimental program.

Duration of Project: approximately two years.

### STUDIES ON THE TEACHING OF LANGUAGES IN CANADA

The importance of undertaking studies of language teaching in Canada has already been discussed in Section IV. The relevance of a study by this center on modern languages in Ontario hardly requires an explanation. The existing Ontario inquiry is to be extended as Project 6.

#### *Project 6: Studies on the Teaching of Languages in Ontario*

The object of these studies is to build up over a period of time, a comprehensive picture of language teaching in Ontario. In the first two years, such a study should be fairly broad. A fact-finding enquiry of this nature is likely to have many uses. The methods of enquiry might include surveys, intensive studies or a testing program.

Expected Outcome:

1. Documentation and factual data on the state and problems of language teaching in Ontario.

2. Intensive studies of such aspects of language teaching in Ontario as: language teaching in the elementary school, or language teaching at certain other stages, e.g. Grade 13; the teaching of one language, e.g. French, German, or Spanish, in Ontario schools.

Duration of Project: two years for the initial survey.

# VI: Developmental Activities

As was indicated in Section II, the Modern Language Center intends to participate in developmental activities which have particular relevance to schools in Ontario. Some of this work may have to be specially commissioned and staffed. Of necessity, such work must result from an appraisal of needs and priorities within the Ontario school system. Since such an appraisal has not yet been made by the center, the following suggestions must be read as speculative examples of possible developmental activities.

For example, if the conclusions of the Hall-Dennis Report are taken as a guide, certain lines of development would seem particularly important:

(a) Course materials for pupils learning conversational French from Grade 1 will be needed to implement Recommendation 50, "to provide instruction in conversational French for all pupils during the first four years."

(b) If it is intended to develop methods of instruction which will individualize the French program, as Recommendation 52[1] suggests, it may be important to think of the production of self-teaching programs or teaching 'modules' which, at present, do not exist.

(c) The recommendations of the Hall-Dennis report to provide opportunities for the study of Russian, Chinese, or Spanish imply a demand for course materials which fit the stages and types of students who are to learn these languages.

Although the developmental work of the Modern Language Center is still in a very early phase, the center is conscious of the importance of such work, as has already been stressed on page 7; in addition it may be worth pointing out that the research plans outlined in this brochure have a strong developmental orientation and, therefore, the results of these studies should form a basis for future work in this area.

[1] Recommendation 52 reads:
Develop methods of instruction which will individualize the French program during the remaining school years to encourage children with a demonstrated language competency.

From what has been said in this brochure it will be seen that the conception of this center is exciting and promising even though at present much of the program is necessarily tentative. The plans need further discussion and evaluation, and they call for the understanding and support of those interested in language teaching in Ontario, Canada, and elsewhere.

This brochure may have prompted questions or suggestions. The center will be glad to receive comments, suggestions or enquiries.

Such communications should be addressed to:

The Director, Modern Language Center,
Department of Curriculum,
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education,
102 Bloor Street West, Toronto 5, Ontario, Canada.